CHAPTER 15

THE STRUCTURES AND EXPANSION OF THE FIELD OF THE MIRACULOUS

The belief in the omnipresence of the supernatural and in the constant intervention of the inhabitants of the hereafter in the world of the living was a basic feature of the medieval mentality. In medieval eyes, the miracles of the saints constituted one of the principal ways in which this close relationship between heaven and earth took concrete form. A consideration of the action and effects of the radiation emanating from the bodies of the saints will help to reveal the fundamental representations of sainthood and their evolution.

THE RULES OF INTERCESSION

From the tomb to the image: the locus of the invocation

The historian embarking on a study of the miracles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries must first ask whether the way in which the faithful sought to capture and profit from this beneficial energy had remained the same throughout the Middle Ages. In the collections of miracles from the Merovingian and Carolingian periods, the *virtus* of a saint is a force which acts in a given place: it was enough to visit and touch the tomb of a servant of God to be healed. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, these ideas had lost none of their potency. In the first processes of canonization, we find more or less all the modes and rites of healing attested for the early Middle Ages, which usually date back to pre-Christian, if not prehistoric, times. Most of those cured had recovered their health after travelling to the place where the remains of a saint lay and sleeping nearby, since it was believed that their therapeutic power acted most effectively during

sleep.[1] Ideally, the incubation culminated in a vision or apparition of the intercessor whose help had been sought, soon followed by the cure. The church was flooded with light and, if the beneficiaries of the miracle were *contracti* (paralytics, hemiplegics etc.), who accounted for the majority of those frequenting the sanctuaries, there was a loud noise as bones and nerves went back into place.[2] The departure of the malady was sometimes preceded by profuse night sweats, after which the invalid woke with the dawn, fresh as a daisy.[3] It was rare, however, for the miracle to happen on the first day. Pilgrims usually had to spend some time at the sanctuary – at least nine days (a novena), sometimes two or three weeks – before their wishes were granted.[4]

The 'magical' character of these healing rites is confirmed by the attitude of the faithful to the thaumaturgical saints when they revealed their gifts in their lifetime. In the process of canonization of St Peter of Morrone (Celestine V, d. 1296), it is several times mentioned that his disciples had to discourage people who asked him to recite incantations over their wounds or diseased limbs. The hermit of Maiella, not wishing to be thought a sorcerer, was only prepared to bless the damaged organs with

[1] At the enquiry into the miracles of St Elizabeth of Thuringia, a man miraculously cured reported an old man as saying to him: 'sine dubio curaberis, si meo consilio manum debilem ad caput sepulchri sub lapide miseris, et quanto profundis tanto cicius curaberis': *PC Elizabeth*, p. 254. For the practice of incubation in the Middle Ages, see D. Mallardo, 'L'incubazione nella cristianità medievale napoletana', *Anal. Boll.*, 57 (1949), pp. 465–98; H. Silvestre, 'Note complémentaire sur l'incubation et ses survivances', *Revue du Moyen Age latin*, 5 (1949), pp. 141–8. There is fourteenth-century evidence both of its survival and of attacks on it: when a doctor who had gone blind was content to beg St Louis of Anjou to cure him, his wife, 'videns quod omnes febre languidi quacumque detinerentur infirmitate, solum quod dormirent super sepulchrum predicti sancti Ludovici sani et incolumes redierant, sic aggressa est virum suum: quare stat hic ad solem et non vadit ad dormiendum super tumulum sancti Ludovici? . . . si dicit quod non potest dormire ibi, bibat tantum de vino puro ut postmodum dormiat velit nolit': *Liber miraculorum S. Ludovici episcopi*, *Analecta Franciscana*, VII (Quaracchi, 1954), pp. 309–10.

[2] For example, *PC Thomas of Hereford*, fol. 69: 'tunc apparuerat in dicta ecclesia quaedam magna choruscatio sive lux, qua apparente et existente in dicta ecclesia, ossa dicte Alice fecerant fragorem sue strepitum et nervi fuerant extensi et tota fuerat curata'. For the exact meaning of the word *contractus*, see P. A. Sigal, 'Comment on concevait et on traitait la paralysie en Occident dans le Haut Moyen Age (Ve–XIIIe siècles)', *Revue d'histoire des sciences*, 197 (1971), pp. 153–211.

[3] *PC John Cacciafronte*, p. 248: 'duxerunt eum ad sanctum et parum stetit; ipse coepit sudare et versatus est in aqua . . . et tunc per misericordiam Dei liberatus est'. See also *PC Hugh of Lincoln*, p. 100.

[4] *PC Elizabeth*, p. 254: 'adiecit etiam stultos esse illos esse qui, proiectis oblationibus recedunt, cum in hoc complacitum sit sanctis ut cum expectatione et perseverantia eorum suffragia petantur'. See plates 37–8.

the sign of the cross.[5] If they could not see him, as in the case of women, who were not allowed to approach his cell, the faithful were content to touch objects which he had touched. They refused to leave without having received a sign or a favour in proportion to the often considerable effort they had expended to reach his cell deep in the Abruzzi.[6] Things were no different elsewhere in Europe; the sick and the mad were brought to St Hugh of Lincoln for him to make the sign of the cross over their head with his saliva.[7] When Philip Berruyer, archbishop of Bourges, visited the parishes in his diocese in the mid-thirteenth century, peasants rushed up to him to touch and kiss his feet; those unable to manage this kissed the hoof marks left by his horse; the monks were no different and, at the abbeys where he stopped, sick monks were brought to him to be cured of their ills.[8] This universal faith in the thaumaturgical virtue of bishops is probably related to the fact that they possessed full sacerdotal power, and, like the Apostles whose successors they were, laid hands on those who sought the sacrament of confirmation as well as on the sick. This is suggested by the reaction of the hermit John Bonus – a layman – who began by declaring to those who came to him seeking a cure that he was 'neither doctor nor priest', before, out of charity, giving in to their demands.[9]

It would be wrong to conclude, however, from these few examples, that the attitude of the masses to miracles had remained unchanged since the time of St Martin. On the contrary, a new and important phenomenon revealed a significant change in the relations between human beings and heavenly intercessors, that is, the increase in the proportion of miracles performed by saints some distance from the place where their remains lay. In many regions, after 1200, the promise to travel to the tomb of a servant of God to obtain a favour became conditional and the supplicant only made this journey if the favour requested was granted. The act persisted, but it was now only a rite of satisfaction, not something indispens-

[5] An archpriest of Sulmona, hardly uneducated since he was called *magister Gentilis*, said to one of the saint's companions: 'Quomodo possum facere quod pater sanctus . . . incantet michi in gula propter scrofulas istas quas habeo?' It is hardly surprising if the laity did the same: *PC Peter of Morrone*, p. 272.

[6] Turned away by Peter of Morrone, some peasants who had brought a sick man to him to be cured declared firmly: 'nec redire intendimus sine gratia aliquali': *ibid.*, p. 254. Similarly, a woman suffering from gout settled near the tomb of St Louis of Anjou 'nolens inde recedere donec fuisset curata': *PC Louis of Anjou*, p. 188.

[7] *PC Hugh of Lincoln*, pp. 97–8.

[8] *PC Philip of Bourges*, fols. 36v, 41, 50, 51, 93v.

[9] *PC John Bonus*, *AA.SS.* Oct. IX, p. 825.

Table 30 *Distribution of* post mortem *miracles attested in processes of canonization (1201–1417) as a function of the place where they occurred*[a]

Saints	Date of process	At the tomb	At a distance (= without direct contact with the relics)
Gilbert of Sempringham	1201		
Hugh of Lincoln	1219		
Hugh of Bonnevaux	1222		
John Cacciafronte	1223/4		
Odo of Novara	1240		
Ambrose of Massa	1240/1		
Philip of Bourges	1265/6		
Thomas Cantilupe	1307		
Louis of Anjou	1307		
Yves	1330		
Delphine	1363		
Charles of Blois	1371		
Urban V	1381		
Peter of Luxembourg	1390		
Nicholas of Linköping	1417		

Note:

[a] In the processes of SS Hildegard (1233–43) and Margaret of Hungary (1276), most of the miracles recorded seem to have occurred at the tomb, but the confused nature of the depositions makes it difficult to count them with any confidence. In the other processes not mentioned here, the information about the circumstances of the miracles is not sufficiently detailed for reliable statistics to be based on them.

able to the performance of the miracle.[10] These cures at a distance became increasingly frequent after 1300, as the processes of canonization of SS Louis of Anjou and Yves and of Charles of Blois reveal.[11] Table 30 shows that the change happened earlier in Italy and France than in England and Sweden, where the link between the performance of prodigies and contact with the holy body remained close.[12] As a general rule, however, in the

[10] An example of a conditional vow: 'convertit se cum multo dolore et devocione ad beatum Ludovicum de Marsilia . . . vovens quod si dictus filius suus de sua ydropisi curaretur, dicta mater cum uno sudario et una libra cere dictum filium suum duceret Marsiliam ad sepulchrum beati Ludovici': *PC Louis of Anjou*, p. 184.

[11] This is not, of course, related to how near or far from the tomb witnesses were when they invoked the saint; most of those cured by the intercession of St Louis of Anjou between 1298 and 1307 came from and still lived in Marseilles; but they did not go to the church of the Friars Minor to touch his relics, which they could easily have done.

[12] This was also the case in the Slav countries, according to an episode in the *Miracula beati Wenceslai* concerning the vicissitudes of a prisoner several times freed by the intercession

later Middle Ages, devotion to the saints tended to be distanced from the cult of relics, even though, in the conditional vows, a concrete topographical reference always persisted.[13] The powers of the saints gained in universality, since they were less closely linked than in the past to a single place, that is, where their remains lay.[14] Above all, the spiritual charge of the cults accorded to them grew, inasmuch as their beneficial action was not exercised automatically, but through intermediaries – the image and the word – which were capable of conveying a specifically Christian religious message.

Among the factors which helped to dissociate the cult of the servants of God from the pilgrimage to their tombs, the spread of the image was crucial.[15] Admittedly, the iconographical representation of the saints was as old as Christianity itself. They are, after all, portrayed on the triumphal arch of the old Roman basilicas, on either side of Christ in majesty, whose light shines over them. Some are individualized and their names are indicated on the mosaics; others belong to groups distinguished by their specific attributes (martyrs, virgins etc.). They are all there, fixed in a hieratic pose, inseparable from the Saviour who awaits them in the celestial Jerusalem, to associate them in his victory. From the eleventh century, on the walls of some urban churches, cycles of more narrative frescoes illustrated various episodes from the legend of a particular confessor whose relics – or memory – were venerated by the faithful. But they usually

of St Wenceslas and eventually sold into slavery abroad by his gaolers, 'putantes beatum martirem longe a se petitorum preces exaudire non posse': P. Devos, 'Le dossier de S. Wenceslas dans un manuscrit du XIIIe siècle (Cod. Bollandianus 433)', *Anal. Boll.*, 82 (1964), p. 124.

[13] Even in countries where the link between the *virtus* of a saint and the place where it was most powerful remained close, a degree of uncertainty was apparent in the fourteenth century as to precisely where this privileged place was. A witness at the canonization process of St Thomas Cantilupe told how, having gone blind, he first had some eyes of wax taken to the birthplace of the prelate, which produced only a slight improvement; he then sent someone to Hereford to pray for him on the saint's tomb, and his sight improved further; but it was only when he went there in person that he was completely cured: *PC Thomas of Hereford*, fol. 27.

[14] When his wife told him to sleep on the tomb of St Louis of Anjou, the blind merchant of Marseilles (see n. 1 above) replied: 'Nonne scis tu quia virtus sancti ita bene potest me iuvare hic sicut ibi, et in vigilia sicut in sompno? Nescis quid dicis et ideo manifeste apparet quod non habes fidem in sanctis.' Real or fictitious, this dialogue reveals two different conceptions of the intercession of the saints. This divergence only grew more marked over the following centuries, with the proliferation of Marian sanctuaries which people visited to thank the Virgin for an act attributed to her, not to touch her relics, by definition rare (though some were claimed).

[15] For the replacement of the relic by the image in the Mediterranean region, see A. Dupront, 'Pèlerinages et lieux sacrés', *Mélanges F. Braudel*, II (Paris, 1973), pp. 189–206.

concerned saints remote in time, such as SS Clement and Alexis, portrayed on the walls of the lower basilica of St Clement in Rome.[16] In the thirteenth century, images of recent saints became common, as for example at Anagni, where the effigy of St Thomas Becket was painted within a few decades of his death, in a chapel in the cathedral crypt.[17] In Rome itself, it was in the 1280s that the new saints – SS Francis of Assisi and Antony of Padua – appeared for the first time alongside those customarily included in the traditional groups (the Virgin and the Apostles, St John Baptist, SS Peter and Paul, St Lawrence and St Agnes) in the absidal mosaics of St Mary Major and St John Lateran,[18] and in the Aracoeli (Capocci and Colonna chapels). More important still were the consequences of the spread of altarpieces and polyptychs which had saints as their central figures (their miracles being portrayed on the sides and predella). St Francis of Assisi was the first to benefit from this fashion, as is shown by the innumerable paintings of his likeness – some made very soon after his death – still preserved today in the churches and museums of central Italy.[19] The fact that an entire cycle of frescoes covering the walls of the upper basilica at Assisi was devoted to him by Giotto, after some experiments in the lower basilica, had immense consequences on the artistic plane. Previously, the great decorative cycles in the churches had usually had as their theme the history of salvation – from the creation of the world to the Resurrection of Christ and the announcement of the end of the world. By preferring the life and miracles of a recent saint to stories from the Old and New Testaments, the Friars Minor demonstrated their conviction that St Francis of Assisi was, indeed, a second Christ.[20]

[16] H. Toubert, 'Rome et le Mont-Cassin: nouvelles remarques sur les fresques de l'église inférieure de Saint-Clément de Rome', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 30 (1976), pp. 1–33.

[17] Today much damaged, but described in A. Prosperi, *Anagni e suoi monumenti* (Anagni, 1970), pp. 46–9; see also Kaftal 2, cc. 1095–8, where they are dated to the first decades of the thirteenth century.

[18] B. Kleinschmidt, 'Die künstlerische Kanonisation des hl. Vaters Franziskus', *AFH*, 3 (1910), pp. 615–25; L. Oliger, 'Due mosaici con S. Francesco della Chiesa d'Aracoeli di Roma', *AFH*, 4 (1911), pp. 213–51.

[19] Some are even earlier; the fresco in Subiaco depicting St Francis must have been painted while he was still alive: B. Ladner, 'Das älteste Bild des hl. Franz von Assisi. Ein Betrag zur mittelalterlichen Porträtsikonographie', in *Festschrift E. P. Schramm*, I (Wiesbaden, 1964), pp. 449–60. For the iconography of St Francis in Italy in the thirteenth century, see G. Kaftal, *St Francis in Italian painting* (London, 1950). The *Tractatus de miraculis B. Francisci*, ed. *Analecta Franciscana*, 10 (1926–41), pp. 275–6, reveals the early diffusion of images of St Francis in the homes of the faithful when it mentions a Roman matron (probably pre-1250) who venerated him deeply, 'cuius imaginem depictam habebat in secreto cubiculo, ubi patrem in abscondito orabat'. See also plate 39.

[20] H. W. Van Os, 'St. Francis as a Second Christ in early Italian painting', *Simiolus, Netherland's Quarterly for the History of Art*, 7 (1975), pp. 11ff.

Despite all their efforts, the Mendicants could not reserve these prerogatives to their founders and heroes for long; in the fourteenth century, especially in Italy, more and more chapels and even churches were covered with paintings portraying the life and miracles not only of recent saints but of simple uncanonized *beati*.[21]

At the same time, the images of saints began to acquire an autonomy and a mobility which made them prime instruments in the diffusion of their cults. There was no disciplinary rule to check this iconographical flowering, since the Church regarded it as an expression of private devotion, perfectly acceptable as long as it was not accompanied by unseemly signs of devotion.[22] Even in the case of representations of servants of God not officially recognized by the papacy, there was little likelihood of the ecclesiastical authorities intervening. This great freedom encouraged a proliferation of images of every sort devoted to the saints. It was not a purely Italian phenomenon, even if it is in Italy that traces of this abundant artistic output have best survived, and there are many indications that the situation was similar in France and England.[23] In the Mediterranean countries, the representation of the saints nearly always took the form of a painting: fresco, altarpiece or painted picture.[24] Elsewhere in Christendom, statues of stone or wood were equally common.[25] But in the fourteenth century, Italian fashions

[21] We should remember Salimbene's diatribes against the inhabitants of the towns of Lombardy, Emilia and Romagna, who covered the walls of their churches and cities with portraits of popular but uncanonized saints, with the approval of the secular clergy (*Cronica*, II, p. 733). The initiative came from the communal authorities, as shown by article 43 of the statutes of Osimo, in the Marches ('de faciendo depingi picturas . . . in quaslibet portas'), providing for likenesses of the Virgin and SS Christopher and Benvenuto to be painted on the gates of the town: Vecchetti, *Memorie istorico-critiche di Osimo*, pp. 471–2. We know that there were many cycles of frescoes devoted to uncanonized saints in Italy; the most important was at Cortona, in the church of St Basil, mid-fourteenth-century, in honour of St Margaret (d. 1297). It had disappeared by the seventeenth century, but several copies survive, in particular in the canonization process of 1640, *ASV, Riti*, Proc. 552, pp. 1003–39. There was also a cycle dedicated to B. Gerard of Villamagna (d. 1242) in the parish church of San Donnino, his native region, in Tuscany: *AA.SS.* Maii III, p. 145. The principal series still visible today is that in honour of B. Joan of Signa (d. 1307) in the parish church of Signa, near Florence (Kaftal 1, cc. 539–49) dating from 1441.

[22] See above, p. 86.

[23] For France, see above, p. 128. For England, iconographical survivals are rare, as a result of the destruction following the Reformation. But there still survive in churches and collections of paintings numerous images of the child martyr, William of Norwich (d. 1144), who was never canonized. Many are reproduced in Jessop and James, *Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*.

[24] See the catalogue of the exhibition *Retables italiens du XIIIe au XVe siècle*, organized by C. Ressort (Paris, 1978), with bibliography.

[25] See, for example, *PC Charles of Blois* (Angers, 1371), p. 242.

spread north of the Alps. Charles of Blois, according to his process of canonization in 1371, had pictures of St Yves painted *ad modum Lombardie*, which he presented to the Mendicant churches in his duchy.[26] At the beginning of the fifteenth century, a further stage in the diffusion and popularization of the portraits of the saints arrived with the appearance of pious images. We first hear of them – without knowing whether they are the first – at the process of canonization of St Catherine of Siena. In his lengthy deposition, the Dominican Thomas Caffarini, chief organizer of the cult of the 'mama', said that 'very recently' (this was in 1410) 'strips' representing the principal episodes in her life had been painted on paper and thousands of copies made to be put up in churches on the day of the celebration of her feast. They could be taken away, he added, which made it possible for people to venerate the saint privately in their own homes.[27]

The wider diffusion of representations of the saints inevitably had repercussions for their function. The image was first an ex-voto. People offered the servants of God little pictures depicting the miracles obtained through their intercession.[28] In the case of a new saint, whose cult was not yet established, the act of the donor was also a piece of propaganda; what

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 101.

[27] *PC Catherine of Siena*, p. 93: 'ordinatum fuit per quemdam devotum eiusdem precipuum ut ymago ipsius virginis etiam ystorialiter [= conforming to the legend] de facili multiplicabilis depingeretur in cartis, de quibus in die commemorationis prefate plurime inter ramos seu florum manipulos ponerentur . . . ut sic possent iuxta debitam licentiam non solum in publico sed etiam in propriis stationibus sive domibus venerari. Et certus sum quod ex quo coeperunt dicte ymagines virginis fieri, plura millia facta sunt et quotidie fiunt.' For the use of the images of saints in the modern period, see A. Vecchi, *Il culto delle immagini nelle stampe popolari* (Florence, 1968). There is no satisfactory study of this phenomenon for the Middle Ages; we need, first, more studies of the representation of individual saints in manuscripts, as attempted by some art historians, for example, Mâle, 'La vie de S. Louis'; C. Nordenfalk, 'St. Bridget of Sweden as represented in Illuminated Ms.', in *Essays in honour of Erwin Panofsky*, I (New York, 1961), pp. 371–93; W. Braunfels, *Der Hedwigscodex von 1353 (Sammlung Ludwig)* (Berlin, 1972), pp. 204, 232.

[28] See the general study by L. Kriss-Retenbeck, *Ex voto: Zeichen, Bild und Abbild im christlichen Votivbrauchtum* (Zurich, 1972); interesting remarks in W. Brückner, 'Volkstümliche Denkstrukturen und hochschichtliches Weltbild im Votivwesen. Zur Forschungssituation und Theorie des bildlichen Opferkults', *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde*, 59 (1963), pp. 189–203. Their existence is attested in Siena in the late thirteenth century, near the tomb of Ambrose Sansedoni, OP (d. 1287), according to the *Vita*, by Recupero of Arezzo (= *BHL* 383), ed. *AA.SS.* Mar. III, p. 219. An offering of a painted image of the saint the length of the person miraculously cured is mentioned in the process of St Nicholas of Tolentino: *PC*, fol. 113. In the legend of the Franciscan St Gerardo Cagnoli (d. 1342), a woman offered the convent of the Friars Minor of Pisa 'tabulam parvulam cum hostiolis pictam coram sancto Gerardo': F. Rotolo, 'La Leggenda del B. Gerardo Cagnoli O.M. (1261–1342) di Fra' Bartolomeo Albizzi, O.M.', in *Miscellanea Francescana*, 57 (1957), p. 407.

better way to show one's gratitude to a saint than to make his or her name and power known?[29] The image – painting or sculpture – also helped to familiarize the faithful with new faces. It made it possible to identify intercessors when they appeared in a dream or vision.[30] This gave great importance to the first representation, generally executed at the request of the small community which had originated the devotion. In fact, it determined the conventional features of the saint, a decisive element in the propagation of the cult; in extreme cases, the success of an iconographical model in itself eventually became proof of the sanctity of that individual.[31] But the images of the saints were not only expressions of gratitude on the part of the donors. In the last centuries of the Middle Ages, they tended to become intermediaries which greatly extended the influence of those they portrayed. From the thirteenth century in Italy, the fourteenth in France and England, the faithful increasingly often dedicated themselves to a heavenly protector before a painting or statue seen as substitutes for their tomb.[32] Eventually, the image came to play the same role as the relics; one placed it on the diseased or damaged part of the body, after invoking the name of the saint.[33] It came to acquire an autonomous thaumaturgical power and became the seat of the power of the servants

[29] A merchant of Lucca, cured by the intermediary of B. Gerard Cagnoli, 'misit ad expensas suas Pisas duos pictores qui, forma accepta de figura sancti Gerardi et de ipsius informati miraculis, reversi Lucam ipsum in ecclesia Fratrum Minorum pinxerunt solemniter, ipsam imaginem sexdecim miraculis de patratis per eum accingentes': *ibid.*, p. 440; see also p. 421. A merchant of Genoa, cured at Naples, spread the image of St Bridget in his native town: *PC*, p. 166.

[30] At the canonization process of Dorothy of Montau, a witness said that the saint had appeared to him in a vision 'in tali habitu sicut depicta est in ecclesia Pomesianensi': *PC*, fol. 273. There are many similar incidents in fourteenth-century Italian canonization processes.

[31] The point is made in the articles presented for the canonization of Urban V (p. 377): 'in diversis et plurimis ecclesiis, eius ymago et ymagina seu effigies fuerunt et sunt picte et de die in diem pinguuntur et sic picte honorifice et patenter honorantur cum devocione et reverencia sicut alie ymagines sanctorum, et fiunt oblaciones diverse et diversimode'.

[32] *PC Yves*, p. 472: 'fecit se portari coram ymagine ipsius sancti Yvonis quam idem testis fieri fecerat in ecclesia de Capella Alneti . . . cuius tunc rector erat'. At the process of Charles of Blois, a witness said that his daughter had been cured after a novena spent in front of an image of the saint: *PC*, p. 235. But some witnesses reveal how the link with the tomb lingered in the popular mind; a woman of Macerata, in the Marches, whose son had been healed by the intercession of St Nicholas, 'obtulit quamdam camisiam dicti eius filii supra quamdam figuram depictam in ecclesia ad similitudinem dicti fratris Nicoley, quod Tholentinum propter deformitatem viarum ire non poterat': *PC*, fol. 153v.

[33] In 1389, the duchess of Bourbon, in the middle of a difficult birth, asked her confessor to dedicate her to Peter of Luxembourg, which he did: 'Dicta vero domina interim imaginem dicti Domini Cardinalis super ventrem suum fecit apponi.' The baby soon arrived, and the birth was easy: *PC*, art. 202; *AA.SS.* Apr. I, p. 509.

of God.[34] Through iconography, a new conception of piety emerged, less focussed on the remains of the saints than on their earthly existence. By popularizing the idea that the latter were living creatures possessing, here on earth, the attributes and prerogatives of the 'glorious bodies', and by introducing their representations into the daily life of the faithful, the products of the craftsmen and artists helped to 'delocalize' the devotion accorded to them.

Contract and devotion: the changes in the vow

In the miracles described in medieval sources, the intercession of a saint on someone's behalf was conditional on the making of a vow, whether the favour was requested on the occasion of a pilgrimage to the tomb or before an image. However brief, this spoken formula was the constituent element in the relationship established between a man or woman and his or her heavenly protector. It always contained both an invocation of the saint addressed by name (*sancte* or *beate X*, *adiuva me*, for example) and a precise commitment or series of commitments, the performance of which constituted either the prior condition or the price paid for the miracle. This moral contract was not entered into lightly; before dedication to an intercessor, a monk or nun had to get permission from his or her superior, since, by making the contract, some liberty was surrendered.[35] We may, without exaggeration, compare the vow to homage; it seems likely that the rites of 'devotion' were influenced by feudo-vassalic ritual, or, at the very least, originated in the same outlook. In dedicating themselves to a saint, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, individuals placed themselves under the saint's exclusive protection and promised, often before witnesses, to do something they believed would please him or her. Admittedly, the majority of these commitments were made *ad experimentum*; if they did not get what they wanted after a certain period of time, the

[34] *Ibid.*, art. 201: a Provençal nobleman dedicated his wife to Peter of Luxembourg before she gave birth, after bringing an image of the saint into the house. At the birth, the baby bore a resemblance to the young cardinal as he appeared in the image. The icon lived; it could even bleed, like that of Charles of Blois in the church of the Cordeliers of Dinan, when it was removed by the English and the supporters of John IV de Montfort: *PC*, p. 283.

[35] See, for example, *PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 137: 'Domina Isaia recommandavit se et devovit sorori Clarae ad suggestionem sororis Ioannae abbatissae concedentis sibi licentiam de voto.' In the process of St Elizabeth, a Cistercian abbot expressed unease at the vow made by one of his monks: 'ob institutione regulae, scilicet Benedicti, qui vetat fratres sine permissione spiritualis patris speciale aliquid facere vel vovere': *PC*, p. 244.

supplicants recovered their freedom.[36] But if the request was successful, they must remain faithful to their 'patron' as long as they lived.[37]

It is obviously impossible to know how often the expectations of the faithful were met since, by definition, processes of canonization and collections of miracles only record the evidence of those who were satisfied. The latter felt obliged to carry out their commitments under pain of incurring the vengeance of the saint, in the form of a return or aggravation of the illness from which they had been delivered. Recourse to doctors, when the saint had already started a cure, had the same result. These relapses were popularly attributed to a lack of faith, which amounted to a sort of unilateral breaking of the contract.[38] On the other hand, if the vow addressed to a saint or the pilgrimage made to the tomb did not produce the desired outcome, the individual was justified in seeking a more effective intercessor. This seems to have happened quite frequently, to judge from the statements made at the enquiries by those who had been miraculously cured. They went out of their way to emphasize the efficacy of whoever had healed them, in contrast to the impotence of the intercessors they had previously appealed to in vain.[39]

What was the precise nature of the vow? In principle, it consisted of making a gift of one's own person or of the person on whose behalf the saint's intervention was sought, usually a child or relative. The formulas known to us are so many and varied that it seems unlikely there was ever a single model. But the basic ideas expressed are always essentially the same. First, there was the notion of restitution, implied in the Latin texts by the use of the verb *reddere*: one 'gave back' to the saint and to God the person dedicated to that saint, that is, one surrendered responsibility for the person and he or she became the saint's property. But at the same

[36] For example, the vow made by the *curé* of Saint-Julien, diocese of Gap, to St Louis of Anjou: 'devovit se per hunc modem quod si beatus Ludovicus apud Deum sanitatis graciam impetraret ita quod dominica sequenti posset missam et divinum officium celebrare et populum sibi commissum regere, ipse tempore paschali veniret ad sepulchrum ipsius Massilia causa peregrinacionis et devocionis': *PC*, p. 194.

[37] 'Ego ero tibi semper fidelis', declared one woman, in her vow (*PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 875), stating the obvious.

[38] For the return of the sickness in more acute form after a broken vow, see *PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 800; for the same after resorting to a doctor after making a vow, see *PC Lawrence of Subiaco*, p. 86; in this case, a new vow was necessary because the first had been broken: 'vivit Deo beatoque fratri Laurentio se numquam de cetero adhibiturum aliquod medicamentum si mereretur resanari'. See also plate 40.

[39] At the process of Nicholas of Tolentino (d. 1305), some merchants said they had been saved from a shipwreck by his intervention after they had appealed in vain to SS Thomas of Ortona, Cyriac of Ancona and Marcellin and Julian of Rimini: *PC*, fol. 234.

time, the saint was asked to restore the person alive or well to the family, and a series of commitments were made, to be performed if the wish was granted.[40] The content of these promises varied enormously, but they developed in the same direction though more or less rapidly according to country. In the late twelfth and up to the middle of the thirteenth centuries, the gift of oneself was still common, especially in the Germanic world.[41] If the saint in question belonged to a religious order, the promise was sometimes to enter a convent or serve it as a lay brother. Children for whom a cure was sought were often made to take a vow of chastity, or the supplicant took it on their behalf. If a miracle occurred, the parents left the child at the monastery or church which housed the tomb of the saint as an oblate.[42] The vow still retained all its power and was accompanied by a renunciation of liberty, more or less complete, but real.

By the end of the twelfth century, less restrictive forms of commitment were appearing. At the enquiry into the miracles of St Galgano, held at Montesiepi, near Siena, in 1185, only one woman had become a nun after a miraculous cure, whereas two men declared that they had promised to labour for a year in the service of the saint, that is, of the abbey he had founded and where he was buried.[43] We should probably compare the status of these temporary oblates to that of the *cerecensuales* common in the Germanic world, who came every year to place a rent in recognition of their servitude before the tomb of the patron saint of the church or abbey to which they were answerable.[44] These were, however, survivals,

[40] *PC Philip of Bourges*, fol. 68: 'Domine, reddo vobis et beato Philippo filiam meam et si redditis eam mihi, requiram vos, beatum Philippum, nudis pedibus sine camisia.' At the process of St Yves, the bishop of Saint-Pol de Léon, William Villesauxe, advised dedicating a mad woman as follows (1329): 'Consulo et laudo quod voveatur et reddatur ipsa infirma S. Yvoni et confido quos curabitur. Et ego nunc ipsam voveo et reddo Jhesu Christo et S. Yvoni et adducatur ea ad sepulchrum S. Yvonis': *PC*, p. 178.

[41] The process of St Elizabeth records the words of a girl of eighteen who travelled to Marburg to beg to be cured: 'Mater, quia homines libere conditionis sumus, si placet tibi, ponam caput meum supra sepulchrum domine Elizabeth, dum illuc pervenerimus, et offeram ei me perpetue servituram': *PC*, p. 233.

[42] At the canonization process of St Margaret of Hungary (p. 297), a mother is reported as saying to her blind daughter: 'Vove castitatem et promittas beate Margarethe quod in perpetuum servies ei.' There are similar statements in the miracles of Urban V (p. 290).

[43] *PC Galgano*, pp. 75, 77. The practice of dedicating oneself to the service of a church for a year persisted in fourteenth-century Sweden: *PC Bridget*, pp. 116–17, 280. For the gift of oneself to the saints, see Hermann-Masquard, *Les reliques des saints*, pp. 285–7.

[44] For categories of dependants, see R. Boutruche, *Seigneurie et féodalité*, I (Paris, 1968), pp. 141–2. Such gifts to a saint were still frequent in the thirteenth century; see, for example, the diploma of Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne, confirming in 1222 the *traditio* of five persons to the altar of St Adelaide of Vilich: *Adelaidis . . . positio, sancta rituum congregatio, sectio historica*, CX (Vatican City, 1959), pp. 59–60.

since, in the vast majority of cases, especially after 1250, there was no clause of this type in the vows made to saints.[45] The gift of oneself seems often to have been commuted by those who made the vow into a lifelong financial commitment; they promised, in return for a miracle, to pay a money rent to the church which contained the relics of the intercessor they invoked.[46] Increasingly, however, offerings in kind became the norm. In England, where the change seems to have happened very early, specific rites were associated with the vow; as they recited the formula of invocation, those requesting a miracle bent a penny in honour of the saint whose intervention they sought; they were then measured against a length of string and, with its aid, a candle of the same length as their body was made. These customs were still practised at the end of the fourteenth century and were not objected to. Even better, the priest was often persuaded to do the measuring himself.[47]

It is hardly possible here to describe in detail the many rites of substitution and thanksgiving revealed by the wording of vows from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, we may note in passing the important role played by wax, in the form of candles of the same length and weight as the person dedicating themselves or the ex-voto representing the diseased and healed part of the body, the ship saved from the storm

[45] D. Gontier and C. Le Bas, 'Analyse socio-économique de quelques recueils de miracles dans la Normandie du XIe au XIIIe siècle', *Annales de Normandie*, 24 (1974), pp. 72ff., have shown that the wording and content of vows changed significantly in Norman collections of miracles between the early twelfth and the late thirteenth centuries. In the earliest cases, the most common personal commitment was either to put oneself in the service of a certain saint (*se tradere alicui sancto in servicio*) or to promise to pay a perpetual recognitary tax (*se alligare pro census capitis*); later, that is in miracles performed by the founders of Savigny and by Thomas Hélye of Biville (d. 1275), the formulas *se vovere* or *vovere aliquem* almost entirely replaced them, and involved lighter obligations.

[46] A merchant of Berry, in 1265, became the 'man of St Stephen for 12d' to obtain his cure; this sum was to be paid annually at Bourges Cathedral on the saint's feast day: *PC Philip of Bourges*, fols. 73v–74. In thirteenth-century Germany, the annual rent paid to saints varied from 2d to 4d: *PC Elizabeth*, pp. 179, 182, 252. The word 'man' was still used in fourteenth-century Brittany of someone who dedicated themself to a saint: 'Ego voveo me dicto sancto Yvoni et promitto me esse hominem suum et sibi dare annuatim sex denarios pro curatione mea': *PC Yves*, p. 151.

[47] For this practice, also found on the Continent, see *PC Hugh of Lincoln*, p. 99: 'acceptoque filo candelis idoneo, cepit puerum mensurare'. The role of the penny bent as rite of substitution is emphasized in a miracle of Richard Rolle of Hampole (ed. Woolley, *Richard Rolle*, p. 82), where those present said to a priest who had come to assist a dying man: 'plica denarium super mortuum offerendum in honorem beati Ricardi'. If a cure followed, the coin was given to the saint. In Normandy, the vow was often accompanied by a gift of tow: Gontier and Le Bas, 'Recueils de miracles', p. 32. In fourteenth-century Italy, the clothes of children healed through their intercession were left on the tombs of saints: *PC Nicholas of Tolentino*, fol. 110v.

etc.[48] Sometimes, silver was used. When the commission instructed by Clement V to investigate the miracles of St Thomas Cantilupe listed the offerings found at his tomb in Hereford Cathedral, they came up with the following:

170 silver ships
41 wax ships
129 silver images of a person or of human limbs
1,424 wax images of a person or of human limbs
77 animal figures
108 crutches
3 wooden vehicles.[49]

As the subjects of the canonization processes were usually recent saints, the *devotio* often entailed a promise to propagate their cult, for example to celebrate a mass or recite prayers in honour of the intercessor or, more often, to abstain from work on the day of their feast, or fast the day before, or name a child after them.[50] In the fourteenth century, this militant action also often took the form of having their likeness portrayed on the walls of a church or in a painting to be hung there.[51] All these forms of vow imply that people felt under an obligation to promote the reputation of their protector. This may well have contributed to the success of the new cults which were established from the end of the thirteenth century. In fact,

[48] *PC Yves*, p. 212: 'promitto vobis unam candelam in longitudine de longitudine mei et grossitudine, ut liberetis me et detis mihi sanitatem'. See also M. Hélin, 'Une fière chandelle', in *Hommage à Marie Delcourt* (Brussels, 1970), pp. 406–17, and the documents collected by A.-M. Bautier, 'Typologies des ex-voto mentionnés dans des textes antérieurs à 1200', in *Actes du 99e congrès des sociétés savantes (Besançon, 1974)*, I (Paris, 1977), pp. 237–82. For the protective role of wax, and in particular of wax-coated threads, sometimes put round churches or towns threatened with epidemics, see L. Kretzenbascher, *Ketternkirchen in Bayern und in Osterreich* (Munich, 1973).

[49] *PC Thomas of Hereford*, fol. 74. At Tréguier, near the tomb of St Yves, in 1331, there were twenty-seven ships of silver and ninety of wax: *PC Yves*, p. 5; the 145th witness at this process was a manufacturer of wax ships, Alan le Cervisier of Tréguier, who said that business was good. The process of Charles of Blois (*PC*, p. 301) contains a detailed description of the objects found at his tomb at Guingamp: 'naves, ymagines, pedes cum tibiis, manus, brachia, capita, castra, domus, animalia, aves, ciphi, forme seu figure pecuniarum, doliorum vini, et figure oculorum, mamillarum, genitalium cere, ferracula, pedum et manuum ac eciam camisie pro insignis resuscitatorum, baculi seu potentie, torchie et cerei magni', etc. For maritime ex-votos, see *Ex-voto marins du Ponant, Catalogue de l'exposition*, arranged by M. Mollat (Paris, 1975).

[50] Of many possible examples, I quote only one which is typical: 'Domine Yvo . . . peto a vobis filium meum et si restituatis michi eum, omnibus diebus vite mee jejunabo quinta et sexta feria, videlicet sexta feria in pane et aqua, et numquam utar vestibus lineis nec lingiis': *PC Yves*, p. 119.

[51] See above, pp. 548–53.

the faithful felt themselves to be in a strong, or at least less weak, position with regard to the saints who did not yet enjoy great fame. Consequently, they did not hesitate to provoke, even defy, them to get them to act on their behalf.[52]

Another new element in the vows of this period was the promise to perform charitable works. The practice of commutation, already visible in the transition from the actual gift of the person to that of the same weight in wax or payment of a money rent, continued to advance in the fourteenth century. In some cases, the rite of substitution persisted, as, for example, when a father promised to give the saint who saved his child its weight in corn, flour or oil.[53] In other cases, it disappeared and the content of the vow changed. The offering in kind was increasingly frequently accompanied by the promise of a personal ascetic feat or charitable deed. The commitment to fast on the day of the saint's feast in his or her honour, or to visit the sanctuary barefoot and dressed only in a shirt, reveals the influence of the penitential spirituality dear to the laity.[54] The recognitary rent turned, especially in Italy, into alms, and references to gifts of cash for the use of the poor are increasingly common in vows.[55] But the new formulas did not replace the old. In general, promises of this type, far from supplanting the traditional commitments, were added to and combined with them in a variety of ways. This produced some complicated commitments, of which I will quote just two examples: at the process of Clare of Montefalco, in 1318, a witness by the name of Pucpus, son of Ser Gentile of Spoleto, said that he had vowed to make a pilgrimage to the saint's tomb, barefoot, at least once a year, to offer there a wax image the weight of his brother (on whose behalf he was seeking a cure) and a twisted candle weighing two pounds, and to provide 50 livres in Cortona pennies for the marriage of a young girl or the construction of a fine tomb to St Clare, whichever the nuns wished;[56] at the enquiry into the miracles

[52] For example, in the miracles of Gandulph of Binasco, OFM (d. 1260): 'conditionaliter votum vovit quod si suis miraculis beatus Gandolphus eum sanaret, ad ejus honorem missam faceret celebrari, alioquin de cetero non adoraret pro sancto': *AA.SS.* Sept. V, p. 707. This attitude to the saints was not new; for its importance in the life and even liturgy of monasteries in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see P. Geary, 'L'humiliation des saints', *Annales ESC*, 1 (1979), pp. 27–42.

[53] For compensation in corn, see *PC Nicholas of Tolentino*, fol. 89v: in other goods, *PC Elizabeth*, p. 169.

[54] *PC Urban V*, p. 430: 'vovit quod veniret visitatum sepulcrum ipsius domini Urbani in camisia et femoralibus cum una tibia cere cum duobus candelis grossis'.

[55] *PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 799: 'si me liberaveris, prometto in die tui festi dare commedere uni pauperi'.

[56] *Ibid.*, fol. 793.

of St Nicholas of Tolentino in 1325, the notary Francesco Audrioli of Macerata, whose thumb had been cut off by his brother, promised to travel to Tolentino if the wound healed, taking with him a hand of wax, to fast every year on the eve of the new saint's feast, and put his pen at his service. He explained that he had fulfilled this last promise by writing to the pope and cardinals, and by drawing up petitions in the name of the commune of Macerata requesting the canonization of his benefactor.[57]

An analysis of the forms of devotion in the last centuries of the Middle Ages produces, in the last analysis, a very mixed picture, in which practices that one might be tempted, at first sight, to call magical or superstitious coexisted, apparently without difficulty, with acts which expressed a spirituality of the evangelical type. But it is perhaps our vocabulary which is largely responsible for this seeming contradiction. The word 'magic', in particular, is highly equivocal, in that it seems to imply that the only authentic Christianity is that expressed in a moral or doctrinal discourse. Admittedly, by the fourteenth century, the process of dissociation which led to the eventual rejection of large areas of popular religion as superstition, even sorcery, had already begun, as we see from the writings of the great inquisitors of this period, from Bernard Gui to Nicholas Eymerich. But its effects were not yet visible in the sphere of the cult of the saints, where the most archaic expressions of veneration caused the majority of the clergy no concern, as long as the orthodoxy of those who were its object was not in doubt.

The evolution in the form and content of the vows between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries reflects, however, changes in the relationships between the faithful and the intercessors they invoked when in need. Increasingly frequently with the passage of time, people demanded satisfaction before fulfilling the promises they had made to the servants of God. These, in any case, tended to become lighter and, after a complex process of commutation, restrictive commitments were replaced by promises of personal asceticism or charity. These changes were a sign of a new attitude towards the saints, now fully integrated into the religious universe of the faithful; reverential fear had given way to a feeling of confidence, which was expressed in an affectionate familiarity.[58] The idea of a commit-

[57] *PC Nicholas of Tolentino*, fol. 89v.

[58] The growing importance of affection between the faithful and the intercessors they invoked is visible in the vocabulary; in the fourteenth-century, the *affectio* between the person making the vow and their patron saint is often mentioned. At the process of Charles of Blois, a witness who had miraculously escaped hanging thanks to the duke's assistance said that the idea of dedicating himself to the latter had come to him when a woman had

ment to be performed under pain of punishment persisted. But the self-confident or dramatic dialogue which became common between the faithful and their heavenly protectors reveals a shift in the direction of the modern meaning of the word devotion, which implies free choice and following one's inclinations.[59]

In the later Middle Ages, the laity seem to have fully assimilated the rules of intercession as they were defined by the Church. Remarkably, by 1250 in Italy and from 1300 elsewhere in Christendom, references to Christ or to God were common in the formulas employed to request the intervention of the saints.[60] On occasion, these even achieved a degree of theological sophistication. For example, in the process of canonization of Charles of Blois, witnesses asked what words they had used in their prayer of invocation (*quibus verbis interpositis?*) said they had spoken as follows:

> Saint Charles, if it is true that you are a saint in Paradise and that, through the intercession of your merits, Our Saviour Jesus Christ has deigned to perform miracles for you, obtain health for my daughter from Our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, or that she soon dies, and for this I dedicate her to you.

or, from the same document:

> Lord saint Charles, I request God and your blessed body that, if you once did something which pleased him, by reason of which he ought to act for you, that it please you to pray him to restore my daughter.[61]

In a few rare, but not exceptional, cases, the faithful even excused themselves to the intercessor for having requested their cure and accepted in advance that they might be refused. Some particularly devout lay people hesitated between a natural desire to be delivered from their ills and an awareness of the redemptive value of suffering.[62] Admittedly, those who

said, when he was condemned to death, 'quod si aliquam specialem affectionem habebat ad aliquem sanctum, ipsum affectuose requireret', at which point he remembered 'quod habebat specialem affectionem ad sanctum Dominum Carolum quondam ducem Brittannie, quem credebat firmiter esse sanctum': *PC*, p. 205.

[59] Many early-fourteenth-century Provençal vows contained phrases along the following lines: 'ipse devote convertens se ad Beatum Ludovicum' or 'devotens se eidem et promittens', etc.: *PC Louis of Anjou*, p. 172.

[60] *PC John Bonus* (1251–4), p. 875: 'Domine Jesu Christe, rogo te ut meritis fratris Johannis Boni qui jacet in hoc sepulchro, digneris me illuminare ut ego possim laborare et facere facta mea.' See also *PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 561: 'invocavit Christum et rogavit eum quod meritis Beate Clare . . . liberaret puerum'.

[61] *PC Charles of Blois*, pp. 231, 235.

[62] *PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 568: 'Beata Clara, ego rogo te quod per tuam sanctitatem et tua bona opera tu debeas me liberare, si pro meliori est et esse debet anime mee; alioquin misereris mei et intercede pro me ad Dominum, ut faciat mihi misericordiam.' Similarly,

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pondered such problems were in a minority and, for the majority, the saints remained above all an effective recourse in adversity. But the general conception of their role was no longer quite what it had been at the time of Gregory of Tours. Some words of St Louis, reported by William of Saint-Pathus, perfectly encapsulate the way in which late thirteenth-century Christians saw the intercession of the saints:

> It is the same with the saints in Paradise as with the counsellors of kings . . . whoever has business with an earthly king seeks, in effect, to know who he holds in high regard and who, having his ear, is able to approach him successfully. He then seeks out this favoured person and begs him to convey his request. It is the same with the saints in Paradise who, being the friends of Our Lord and his intimates, can invoke him in all confidence, since he cannot fail to listen to them.[63]

The theme of the 'heavenly court' or the 'court of Paradise' which is so common in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts concerning the saints was not simply a stylistic convention. It seems to express how many of the faithful then saw the relations between God and his servants, likening them to those between kings and their great vassals and officials. In medieval processes of canonization, however, there was a certain hesitation when the inquisitors put precise questions to witnesses in order to draw them out on their belief in the efficacy of the power of the saints. For the vast majority, God performed miracles *for* the saints, that is, in consideration of their own merits. From this perspective, it was as if the servants of God had acquired, through the sufferings they had endured during their lifetime, a means of putting pressure on God, in a sense obliging him to intervene on behalf of whoever had put themselves under their protection.[64] Some clergy and devout lay people, on the other hand, believed

in the process of St Louis of Anjou (p. 189), a woman: 'devovit se beato Ludovico . . . non ad istum finem quod vellet a dicta infirmitate curari, quia enim eam multum libenter et pacienter sustinebat quando recordabatur quod Christus in manibus suis fuerat perforatus et passus longe magis vehementum dolorem quam ipsa haberet vel posset sustinere, sed ut Deus manifestaret in ea miracula que debebat facere propter bonam et sanctam vitam quam duxerat et tenuerat beatus Ludovicus quando vivebat'.

[63] *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. Delaborde, p. 73.

[64] Canonization processes contain many examples; see, for example, *PC Louis of Anjou*, p. 32: 'tenet pro firmo quod sit sanctus et quod propter sanctam et perfectam vitam quam ipse habuit et tenuit quamdiu superfuit in hoc mundo, Deus debeat facere miracula pro eo'; or (*ibid.*, p. 82): 'Interrogatus si credit quod merita beati Ludovici requirunt quod Deus debeat facere miracule pro eo et tanta sic facit, dixit quod quando ipse cogitat vitam suam et excellentiam perfectionis quam habuit et tenuit beatus Ludovicus, ipse credit quod merita sua requirunt quod Deus faciat miracula pro eo. Immo miratur quod non plura faciat, quia numquam vidit hominem magis perfectum.' See also *PC Philip of Bourges*, fol. 52v.

that God acted *through* his saints, who were effectively reduced to the role of intermediaries of divine grace.[65] An extreme instance of this is the definition of intercession given by B. Delphine of Puimichel (d. 1360), in a harangue addressed to a group of pilgrims who had asked her to cure them:

> The saints are only powerful to the extent that God gives them the grace to pray for us. Consequently, repent and confess your sins. The latter impede the prayers of the saints. Avoid evil and do good; in which case, the saints are obliged to pray for you and beg what you request.[66]

From this perspective, God's action was dependent on the practice of the moral virtues, of penitence and prayer on the part of the supplicants, the saints being content to encourage by their prayers the action of Grace in the heart of man. At a pinch, their assistance was almost superfluous. Admittedly, this was an isolated opinion, representative only of a very specific milieu, that of the Provençal beguines and their Franciscan confessors. But the mere fact that it could be expressed and recorded in a process of canonization is evidence of the existence, in the fourteenth century, of a pietist tendency inclined to integrate the cult of the saints into a purely spiritual conception of the religious life, within which it eventually lost its specificity.

THE RESULTS OF INTERCESSION

What was it that the crowds who flocked to wherever a saint's relics were to be found, or rushed to see one, expected? What did they ask for when they implored the aid of their regular intercessor or tried out a new one? It is difficult to give precise answers to these questions, so varied, though also in some ways similar, were the results expected from the intervention of the servants of God. Historians have been discouraged by the abundance of the documentation and its relatively stereotyped character and there has long been a tendency to dismiss as trivial and unusable the thousands of prodigies recorded in the hagiographical texts and other sources concerning the cult of the saints. This neglect seems to me unjustified and I believe that, subject to some methodological precautions,

[65] For the hesitation between the two conceptions, see the deposition of Brother Roger of Hunnedon, sub-prior of the London Augustinians, at the process of Thomas Cantilupe (*PC*, fol. 38): 'credit tamen idem testis . . . quod si sanctus et quod Deus pro eo sive per eum sicut pro sancto vel per sanctum miracula operatur'.

[66] *PC Delphine*, fol. 101. See also below, pp. 475–6.

the stories of miracles can provide valuable information in the most diverse fields. I will try below to analyse the requests made by the faithful to their protectors, with the emphasis on their content rather than on the way they were expressed.

Fertility and prosperity

To most people, the saints were first and foremost beings who possessed power over nature and the elements. Did they not make rain or fine weather, in the most concrete meaning of the words?[67] More generally, the presence of a saint or his or her relics in a given place or region could stimulate the productive forces of nature. This confidence in the economic efficacy of sainthood is already apparent in some early medieval hagiographical texts, such as the Life of St Didier, Bishop of Cahors (d. 655), of whom his biographer wrote:

> During his lifetime, the harvests were abundant, the vines and the crops were so fruitful that neither before nor since had anyone seen anything like it. In the town, hardly anyone was poor, no-one found it difficult to get what he wanted and people lacked neither food nor clothing. All needs were satisfied and there was more than enough of everything.[68]

Given what is known about the role played by the bishops in the towns of Merovingian Gaul and their evergetism, such a text is susceptible of a positivist explanation; holder of local power and master of a part of the soil and its resources, his initiatives compensating for the failure of the public authority, in particular with regard to subsistence, a prelate who conscientiously performed the duties of his office could make a strong

[67] This is already visible in stories told by the author of the *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, ed. W. Trillmich, IV, pp. 344–5, about one of the first bishops of Scania: 'claruit autem virtutem miraculis, ita ut poscentibus in necessitate barbaris, imbrem faceret descendere vel denuo serenitatem venire et alia quae hactenus queruntur a doctoribus'. As the last phrase shows, this power was thought to be a prerogative of bishops (*doctores*) and, more generally, the clergy. Gregory VII complained to King Haakon of Denmark about the violent attacks made by his subjects on priests when they failed to get the weather they wanted: *Gregorii VII registrum*, ed. E. Caspar (*MGH. Ep. selectae*, II), VII, 21, p. 498; R. Manselli, 'Gregorio VII di fronte al paganesimo nordico: la lettera a Haakon, re di Danimarca', *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 28 (1974), pp. 127–32. References to episcopal charismas in the meteorological field also appear in fifteenth-century Scandinavian processes of canonization, for example, *PC Nicholas of Linköping*, p. 70; *PC Franco d'Assergi*, Paris, BN, H. 929, *Summarium*, fol. 15v (Franco was a hermit who died in the Abruzzi *c.*1300).

[68] *Vita Desiderii Cadurcae urbis episcopi*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison, in *MGH.SRM.*, IV, p. 581. For the saint-bishops of Gaul, see M. Heinzelmann, *Bischofherrschaft in Gallien* (Munich, 1976).

impression on his flock and be remembered as a benefactor whose efficiency and largess had allowed them to live, for a while, in prosperity. It is more surprising to see, several centuries later, the same powers attributed to relics, whether of a bishop or a hermit. But this is to forget that, in the popular mind, the *virtus* of the servants of God, far from evaporating with their physical death, only redoubled in intensity when they cast off this mortal coil. Furthermore, as we have shown above, the Church had tried since the eleventh century to attribute to the saints the prerogatives of the *rex justus*, as they had been defined by the early medieval clergy.[69] Like the sovereigns whom they gradually supplanted as mediators between the Divine and humankind, they assured, in the widest sense of the word, the safety and prosperity of the peoples placed under their protection. Sanctity created the conditions for abundance, dream of societies of scarcity. This is demonstrated, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, by the deposition of an English Carmelite, who declared to the commissioners entrusted with the enquiry into the life and miracles of St Thomas Cantilupe (d. 1282):

> it is generally believed that, since the bones of Monseigneur Thomas were brought to Hereford Cathedral, the harvests have been more plentiful, the waters have borne more fish and the animals have produced more young.[70]

There is an almost identical claim in the reply made by the Breton peasants to the Franciscans who questioned them about the sanctity of Charles of Blois at the enquiry held in Guingamp in 1371:

> During his lifetime, we, the inhabitants of this region, both ordinary people and nobles, had plenty of food, clothes and all the necessities of life, even though war never ceased to rage. In contrast, since his death, massacre and poverty, misery and penury have descended upon us, and the harvests and cattle have suffered greatly as a result of the wars and oppression inflicted on us by our enemies.[71]

The conviction that the saints – dead or alive – constituted an effective shield against natural catastrophes and that their presence increased the

[69] See above, p. 163. For the results of the king's justice, according to the author of *De XII abusivis saeculi*, ed. G. Hartel, III (Vienna, 1871), p. 167: 'Ecce quantum iustitia regis saeculo valeat intuentibus perspicere patet: pax populorum est, tutamentum patriae, immunitas plebis, munimentum gentis, cura languorum, gaudium hominum, temperies aeris, serenitas maris, terrae fecunditas, solacium pauperum, hereditas filiorum et sibimet ipsi spes futurae beatitudinis.'

[70] *PC Thomas of Hereford*, fol. 40v.

[71] *ASV, Collectorie* 434 A, fol. 11r. There is an echo of these claims in the process at Angers in 1371 (*PC Charles of Blois*, p. 169).

available resources was widely held throughout western Christendom in the later Middle Ages; the pastors of Sabarthès who, in 1320, before the inquisitors of the bishop of Pamiers, claimed that 'since the Bonshommes had to flee the region, the soil was less productive . . . to the point where it no longer produces anything worthwhile', thought like the Swedish peasants who, a few decades later, attributed to the arrival of the relics of St Bridget in her native country all the happy events which had occurred since.[72] This way of appreciating the efficiency of sainthood, seen as a supernatural force which dispelled evil in all its forms and restored order to a world troubled by sin, was not unique to the lower social orders or the rural masses, as one might at first be tempted to assume. It seems clear that, on this point, the most cultivated clergy thought no differently from the peasantry. At the process of canonization of Dorothy of Montau (1404–6), her former confessor, John of Marienwerder, who had taught theology at the University of Prague, dwelled at length on the efficacy of the saint's tears in combatting the effects of drought in the countryside of eastern Prussia.[73] Ignorant of the distinctions later made between the biological and the inner life, the most intellectually rigorous were in accord with the simple-minded in endowing the servants of God with a collection of powers which contributed to the material prosperity of society and the well-being of individuals. Thanks to them, there was, for a while, in a particular place, a sort of Golden Age, at once land of Cockaigne and anticipation of Paradise.[74]

[72] *Le Registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318–1325)*, ed. J. Duvernoy, III (Toulouse, 1965), p. 307. At the process of St Bridget, her daughter described the general feeling in Sweden as follows: 'credimus quod virtus corporis sui et reliquiarum, postquam venit ad regnum, portavit nobis pacem . . . quia antea semper fuimus in tribulacionibus et angustiis sed venerunt nobis pax et omnia bona': *PC Bridget*, pp. 313–14. At the end of the Middle Ages, people became very conscious of the saints' ability to protect against epidemics; see, for example, *PC Joan-Marie of Maillé*, *AA.SS.* Mar. III, p. 758: 'creditur firmiter quod si dicta sancta adhuc vitam gessisset in humanis, pestis mortalitatis in dicta villa Andegavensi tamdiu non durasset'.

[73] *PC Dorothy*, fol. 316: 'Multoties fuit iussa a Domino, praesertim in tempore siccitatis, ut terram in spiritu gyraret et suis lacrimis irrigaret. Et ita lacrimando in spiritu cognovit satis seu segetibus ex his speciales profectus provenire. Unde vidit nunnumquam in spiritu quod ad effusionem suarum lacrimarum, sulci camporum usquequaque aquarum abundantia, scilicet pluvia, replebantur, quod rei eventus de gratia Dei comprobavit.'

[74] It is tempting to compare these texts with the idyllic picture of the primitive Church – that of the saints – painted at this period by Nicholas of Clamanges, who described a world where, thanks to the saints, towns and villages were populous, stables were full of powerful draught animals, the trees were weighed down with fruit, the fields were covered with corn, men lived long lives, and peace and prosperity reigned: quoted by E. Delaruelle, *L'Eglise au temps du Grand Schisme et de la crise conciliaire, 1378–1449* (Paris, 1962), pp. 894–5.

Healing, protection and salvation

In the majority of accounts of miracles linked to the cult of the saints, however, the latter appear primarily as miracle-workers, to whom one appealed to recover one's health. Some witnesses admitted that they had only considered resorting to a celestial intercessor when all treatments had failed and they had been abandoned by the doctors to their unhappy fate. Others claimed they had dedicated themselves as soon as pain or illness had struck and were in good health as a result.[75] Alongside this therapeutic function, which was central to most requests, the servants of God, always disposed to come to the rescue of those who sought their help, also assumed the role of protectors against natural catastrophes and all forms of adversity.

Can we go beyond these general statements, valid for all periods, and try to define more precisely the respective importance of the different types of miracles in the later Middle Ages? The attempt is worth making, but, if our results are to be significant, we need to be aware from the outset of the limitations imposed by the nature of the documentation. In effect, we never see the miracles in their raw state, by which I mean all the acts regarded as miraculous by the faithful, but only those that the clergy deemed worthy of writing down, whether in the *Libri miraculorum* of the sanctuaries of pilgrimage or in the acts of the processes of canonization. There may well have been a gap between the two forms of perception of the miraculous, but this is no more than conjecture, unverifiable in the absence of sources which are not of ecclesiastical origin. In the processes of canonization, as in the Lives of saints, a choice has been made from among the many prodigies available to the promoters of the cult; we see this in the very few cases where both the official enquiry and an earlier collection, in which the miracles were recorded on a daily basis, survive.[76] When this comparison is possible, it reveals that the organizers of the processes tended to prefer the miracles which appear in the Bible,

[75] Both attitudes were present at the same period. For the former, see *PC Clare of Montefalco*, fol. 1023: 'Libera me de hac infirmitate, quia non invenio medicum qui me iuvet de hac infirmitate'; whereas a witness at the process of St Nicholas of Tolentino (*PC*, fol. 90) said: 'cum fuit passa aliquam infirmitatem, recurrit ad dictum Beatum Nicolaum et non vult alium medicum'. Some promises are revealing: 'promisit dare ei in pecunia quantum daretur uni medico qui sanaret eum': *ibid.*, fol. 230.

[76] For the relationship between the miracles in the *Libri miraculorum* and the canonization processes, see J. Paul, 'Miracles et mentalité religieuse populaire à Marseille au début du XIVe siècle', in *Religion populaire en Languedoc*, pp. 61–89; Paul, 'Le "liber miraculorum" de saint Louis d'Anjou', *AFH*, 69 (1976), pp. 209–19.

and especially those which the New Testament attributes to Christ and his Apostles, from the healing of paralytics to the multiplication of the loaves and the fishes.[77] Similarly, there is a marked increase in the number of resurrections from the dead: very rare, if not non-existent, in the processes of the first half of the thirteenth century, they accounted for 10 per cent of miracles in the fourteenth century. This should probably be seen as a consequence of the development of the canonization procedure rather than of a change of attitude on the part of the faithful towards the saints. Aware that it was difficult to get a favourable decision out of the papacy and that the Curia was very demanding with regard to miracles, the promoters of a cause were tempted to raise the threshold of the miraculous to prove the sanctity of their candidate. They accordingly preferred to retain the spectacular cures and resurrections at the expense of other, more dubious, prodigies such as the finding of lost objects or deliverance from toothache through the intercession of a servant of God.[78]

In spite of these reservations, and as long as we keep them always in mind, an analysis of the typology of the miracles in processes of canonization between the early thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries suggests a number of significant conclusions. However dense the filter, it still let through a certain amount of information which sheds light on the attitude of the people of that period to the supernatural. Table 31 enables us to formulate several hypotheses on the basis of a fairly large statistical base. At first sight, there appear to be no dramatic changes to the structure of the field of the miraculous; in almost all the enquiries, cures are overwhelmingly predominant, as in the past. But the relationship between the two categories becomes less unequal with the passage of time: nine to one in the thirteenth century, it falls to less than eight to one on average in the fourteenth century. The relative fall in the percentage of cures is primarily visible in the processes concerning saints who performed many

[77] B. de Gaiffier, 'Miracles bibliques et Vies de saints', *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 88 (1966), pp. 376–85, repr. in de Gaiffier, *Etudes critiques d'hagiographie et d'iconologie* (Brussels, 1976), pp. 50–61; J. Leclercq, 'L'écriture sainte dans l'hagiographie monastique du Haut Moyen Age', *La Bibbia nell'Alto Medioevo* (Spoleto, 1963), pp. 67–101; and, for the East, E. Patlagean, 'Ancienne hagiographie et histoire sociale', *Annales ESC*, 23 (1968), p. 119. Particularly influential for hagiography was the description of the thaumaturgical powers of the Apostles as described in Acts (III, 1–10; IV, 15–16 etc.). Under the title *virtus apostolica*, medieval hagiographers included the following charismas: *fugare demones, sanare infirmitates, resuscitare mortuos, predicare futura*. See, for example, *Vita B. Margaritae virginis de Civitate Castelli*, ed. *Anal. Boll.*, 19 (1900), pp. 21–36, especially chapter 9.

[78] The miracles of this type (lost objects found etc.) which appear in the *Liber miraculorum S. Ludovici episcopi*, ed. *Analacta Franciscana*, VII (Quaracchi, 1951), pp. 275–331, are missing from the saint's canonization process: Paul, 'Liber miraculorum', pp. 64–5.

Table 31 *Development of the typology of the miracles recorded in processes of canonization (1201–1417)*

Types of miracles	% of total number of miracles (= average) 1201–1300[a]	1301–1417[b]
1. Resurrections	2.2	10.2
2. Contagious and organic illnesses	28.6	31.2
3. Paralysis, motor problems (*contracti*)	28.8	12.5
4. Wounds, fractures, non-fatal accidents	5.2	5.6
5. Blind, deaf, mute	12.4	11.7
6. Mental illnesses (possessed by demons, epileptics, mad)	10.7	5.1
7. Difficult births, sterility	1.2	3.3
8. Deliverance and protection	3.2	11.8
9. Religious miracles[c]	3.8	5
10. Miscellaneous	3.9	3.6
Therapeutic miracles (categories 1–7)	90.2	79.3
Other miracles (categories 8–10)	9.8	20.7

Notes:

[a] Percentages based on the following eight processes of canonization: St Gilbert of Sempringham (1201), St Hugh of Lincoln (1219), Hugh of Bonnevaux (*c.*1221), John Cacciafronte of Vicenza (1223–4), Ambrose of Massa (1240), Lawrence Loricatus (1240), Simon of Collazzone (1252), Philip of Bourges (1265–6). In the process of St Hildegard (1233–43), the recording of the statements is too confused for precise figures to be based on it, though it is clear that the majority of miracles consisted of cures of people possessed by devils, epileptics, the blind and the feverish.

[b] Percentages based on the following ten processes of canonization: St Peter of Morrone (1306), St Louis of Anjou (1307), St Nicholas of Tolentino (1323), St Yves (1330), Delphine of Puimichel (1363), Charles of Blois (1371), Urban V (1381), Peter of Luxembourg (1389–90), Dorothy of Montau (1404–6), Nicholas of Linköping (1417).

[c] That is, punishments for blasphemy or broken vows, visions and apparitions, sacramental miracles etc.

miracles in their lifetime, in which case the thaumaturgical function, though remaining fundamental, lost ground to the protective function. Miracles of this type accounted for over a third of the total in the processes of St Yves and Charles of Blois, over a quarter in that of Delphine, even though the latter was unquestionably endowed with a highly effective healing power. Admittedly, it would be risky to draw general conclusions from these figures, and in the latest processes, those of Peter of Luxembourg (Avignon 1390) and Nicholas of Linköping (Sweden 1417), the percentage of cures again reached a very high level. At least one can point to a tendency for the tutelary role of the saints to increase, though people never stopped asking them to restore health to those ill in mind or body.

Another change worthy of note is the perceptible reduction in the percentage of miraculous cures of the mentally ill (possession, epilepsy, vari-

ous forms of madness etc.). Up to the beginning of the fourteenth century, this category still accounted for an average of 10 per cent of miracles; later, this figure fell to about 5 per cent of the total. We should probably relate this change to the efforts made by the Church, from the thirteenth century onwards, to establish a clearer frontier between the sacramental and the miraculous. The healing of those possessed, at the end of the Middle Ages, seems to be more a matter of exorcism, an intervention independent of the dignity of whoever performed it, than of an individual charisma.[79] But it may also reflect a decision to put less emphasis on this type of prodigy in the processes, given that the results obtained by the intervention of the saints in the field of mental illness remained generally fragile (there are many references in the texts to relapses involving a new miraculous cure) and thus hardly conclusive.

In the last analysis, the most striking feature in the evolution of the typology of the miracles is probably the marked reduction in the number of *contracti*, that is, people afflicted with various motor and nervous problems revealed by partial or total hemiplegia or paraplegia.[80] Patients of this type accounted for at least 40 per cent of the clientele of sanctuaries in the early thirteenth century (64.2 per cent at Orvieto in 1240, in the enquiry into the miracles of the Franciscan Ambrose of Massa), compared with an average of only 12 per cent in the processes after 1300, and often considerably less. There are several possible explanations for this change, which is also apparent in other hagiographical documents. In his study of the miracles worked by the relics of St Gibrien, at Saint-Rémi of Reims, P. Sigal suggested that, at the end of the Middle Ages, the word *contracti* was used only for clear cases of paralysis, in the modern meaning of the word, confirmed by the presence of numerous doctors in fourteenth-century enquiries.[81] But this is surely to exaggerate the achievements of medical science between 1100 and 1400 and mistake the role of doctors in the processes of canonization. If their evidence after 1300 acquired greater importance, it was less because they were expected to produce a precise diagnosis, which was usually lacking, than for the 'scientific backing' they brought to claims of the incurable nature of an illness, which

[79] For medieval attitudes to madness, see, in the absence of weightier studies, T. F. Graham, *Medieval minds: mental health in the Middle Ages* (London, 1967); H. H. Beek, *Waanzin in de Middleleuwen Beeld van de gestoorde en bemoienis met de zieke* (Nykerk, 1969). See also R. M. Woolley, *Exorcism and the healing of the sick* (London, 1932).

[80] For the *contracti*, see Sigal, 'La paralysie en Occident'; also plate 41.

[81] P. A. Sigal, 'Maladie, pèlerinage et guérison au XIIe siècle. Les miracles de Saint Gibrien à Reims', *Annales ESC*, 24 (1969), pp. 1522–39, especially p. 1527.

gave additional lustre to the results obtained by the saints.[82] There is another explanation, which is in my view more plausible. This change in the typology of miracles perhaps primarily reflects the changes in the vow discussed above. In the thirteenth century, as in previous periods, the people taken to the tombs of the saints were those most seriously afflicted, that is essentially the paralytics and other *contracti*, as well as the raving mad and epileptics. To the extent that, in the fourteenth century, the effects of the intercession were increasingly experienced at a distance, since it was no longer necessary to touch the relics to achieve a result, the field of the miraculous spread to other types of sickness and other needs, which correspondingly reduced the relative importance of the traditional sectors.

This explanation also accounts for the considerable increase in the number of children cured. As soon as it was no longer necessary to go in person to the tomb of a saint to be cured, there was an explosion of stories of miracles concerning children who were stillborn, smothered in their beds or drowned in the moats of castles or millponds, which had hitherto been rare.[83] The same is true of women who carried a difficult pregnancy to full term. In the thirteenth century, this type of miracle was very infrequent, future mothers being, by definition, in no condition to travel at the very moment when the saint's assistance was needed; later, it became common, which is understandable since it was only necessary to make a vow to be delivered of an illness or suffering. In general, in the later Middle Ages, the saints were invoked more than in the past in all life's difficulties: imprisonment, a sentence of hanging, threats by bandits, one's enemies etc.[84] It was to the saints that one turned when lost in a wood or

[82] D'Antonelli, *De inquisitione medico-legali super miraculis*. One of the most interesting pieces of medical evidence found in canonization processes is that of John of Tournemire, Clement VII's doctor, concerning his daughter, miraculously cured of a breast tumour by the intercession of Peter of Luxembourg in 1390: *AA.SS.* Iul. I, pp. 577, 598–9; his deposition is translated into French and discussed by E. Wickersheimer, 'Les guérisons miraculeuses du cardinal Pierre de Luxembourg (1387–1390)', in *Comptes-rendus du 2e congrès international d'histoire de la médecine* (Paris, 1922), pp. 372–81. It is significant that this leading expert of his day used, to describe his daughter's illness, the popular expression *noli me tangere*.

[83] The proportion of children among those cured became very high with the canonization process of St Thomas Cantilupe, 1306–7. It is tempting to see this as reflecting a greater concern with childhood; my own explanation, whilst not contradicting this, seems to me more convincing. See plate 42.

[84] This sort of intervention by saints was not new, but is more frequently mentioned in the later Middle Ages. See the texts discussed by B. de Gaiffier, 'Un thème hagiographique; le pendu miraculeusement sauvé', *Etudes critiques d'hagiographie*, pp. 194–226; de Gaiffier, 'Liberatus a suspendio', ibid., pp. 227–32.

at sea, if one's house caught fire or an epidemic raged. Far from shrinking, the field of their interventions continued to expand, without faith in their thaumaturgical powers diminishing.

To assess the precise significance of these conclusions, based solely on an analysis of canonization processes, it is useful to compare them with those based on an analysis of collections of miracles, whose compilers were less obsessed with the desired end, that is to demonstrate the sainthood of a servant of God to the Holy See, than were the promoters of official enquiries. When we look at Sigal's study of the miracles of St Gibrien (Reims 1145) and D. Gontier and C. Le Bas' work on the *Libri miraculorum* of twelve Norman sanctuaries (end of the eleventh to end of the thirteenth centuries) we find a striking similarity between the two types of source at the level of general trends.[85] In the twelfth- and thirteenth-century collections, the miracle *par excellence* is the cure of a sickness or accident suffered by a person or, less frequently, an animal; among the prodigies attributed to the relics of St Gibrien, at Saint-Rémi of Reims, such interventions accounted for 96 per cent of the total. This figure is exceptionally high, but the proportion of sick or accident victims was still higher than 80 per cent in the Norman sanctuaries.[86] Among those miraculously cured, the *contracti* were by far the most numerous: nearly 50 per cent at Reims in 1145, just under 40 per cent on average in Normandy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. There were also many mad or other 'lunatic' and 'possessed' people (about 8 per cent at Reims, 10 per cent in Normandy) and a significant number of people who were blind, deaf or dumb (about 20 per cent). The number of resurrections, lastly, was tiny: less than 2 per cent of the total in Champagne, about 3 per cent in Normandy. All these figures are close to those based on the thirteenth-century canonization processes.[87]

[85] Sigal, 'Maladie, pèlerinage et guérison'; Gontier and Le Bas, 'Recueils de miracles'. The latter is based on the miracles attributed to SS Catherine (Rouen), Austreberte (Pavilly), Ouen (Rouen), Wulfrun (Saint-Wandrille), Valentine (Jumièges), Nicholas (various places), Paul, Clare and Cyriac, the founders of Savigny, and Thomas Hélye (Biville), the 'precious blood' of Fécamp and the Virgin Mary (Coutances Cathedral and Saint-Pierre sur Dives).

[86] Sigal, 'Maladie, pèlerinage et guérison', p. 1527, gives two other figures: 43 per cent of cures in the miracles of St Faith (which is small) and 75 per cent in those of St Wulfrun at Saint-Wandrille (second half of twelfth century).

[87] A similar conclusion emerges from an analysis of the sixty-five miracles of St Louis, before his canonization, recorded by William of Saint-Pathus: see M. A. Dollfuss, 'Etude clinique de quelques miracles de Saint Louis', *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de France* (1971), pp. 23–35; Dollfuss, 'Les affections oculaires dans les miracles de S. Louis', *Bulletin de la Société française d'histoire des hôpitaux*, 24 (1970), pp. 3–9.

There is a similar resemblance between the miracles in the collections and those in the official enquiries of the end of the Middle Ages. In the 'Book of Miracles' of Saint-Catherine of Fierbois in Poitou, compiled between 1375 and 1470, cures accounted for only 54 per cent of the prodigies recorded.[88] The *contracti* and the various types of mental or nervous illness constituted respectively only 3.8 and 2 per cent, whilst the proportion of women saved in a difficult pregnancy rose to 3.1 per cent. The saint's interventions to protect the faithful from various dangers accounted for 46 per cent of the total, an even larger proportion than that found in the fourteenth-century processes. The main difference between the two types of document is in resurrections, which were less numerous at Fierbois (6.5 per cent) than in the enquiries concerning St Yves and Charles of Blois (over 15 per cent). I discussed above the significance of this characteristic distortion of the canonization processes. This peculiarity apart, we see at Saint-Catherine of Fierbois the same changes in the miraculous that we noted in the case of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century enquiries, that is an increase in the protective and liberating role of the saints and the extension of their power of intercession to all areas of human life. It would be interesting to make further comparisons to give a broader base to these conclusions, but it is highly likely that the results would be, in essence, comparable, if not identical, as concerns the typology of miracles and its evolution.

There are signs, lastly, that the miraculous power of the saints was now believed to extend to the religious life strictly speaking. In the thirteenth century, when one approached a servant of God, it was essentially to ask for a cure, and people objected when the saint took advantage of their presence to question them about their behaviour. 'Let us stick to the business in hand', was the curt reply of a notary who had taken his sick daughter to St Peter of Morrone, when the latter, who knew he was dealing with a notorious lecher, began to question him about his private life.[89] The role of the saints was to heal, not to convert. They were well aware of this, and generally quite prepared to perform the prodigy requested of them. They stressed, however, in passing, that the thaumaturgical power attributed to them was a gift from God,[90] and endeavoured

[88] Y. Chauvin, ed., *Livre des miracles de sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois (1375–1470)* (Poitiers, 1976).

[89] *PC Peter of Morrone*, p. 226.

[90] The greatest miracle-workers among the saints, in particular the hermits, had a hard struggle to combat the tendency of the faithful to attribute cures to their merits. At the process of Peter of Morrone (*PC*, p. 238), a *contractus* he healed is reported as crying:

to make granting the request conditional on the renunciation of certain morally reprehensible types of behaviour.[91] In the fourteenth century, this changed. Among the requests made to the saints there were some which concerned neither the restoration of health nor protection against the various calamities which could threaten material life: for example, appeals to resuscitate stillborn children long enough for them to be baptised,[92] or requests from blind people for their sight to be restored for a few moments so that they could see the consecrated host.[93] But the most important change was probably an appreciation of the potential moral and spiritual impact of sanctity. Asked, in 1330, why they venerated St Yves, some of his peasant parishioners began by saying that 'when he started to preach to the local people, they became twice as good as they had been before, by the common consent of the neighbourhood'.[94] This was not an isolated case; the processes of St Clare of Montefalco (1318) and Delphine of Puimichel (1363) include frequent observations of a similar nature, by no means all made by the clergy or regulars. The miracles performed by Delphine included several conversions owed to her influence.[95] Nor was

'Liberatus sum, liberatus sum, quia frater Petrus me liberavit.' John Bonus told a man who asked him to perform miracles that he was not God, to which came the reply: 'Vos non estis Deus sed scio quod estis ille qui potest me sanare': *PC*, p. 825.

[91] John Bonus would only cure a woman's daughter if she promised to settle her differences with a relative she disliked (*PC*, p. 788). In the process of Lawrence of Subiaco, there are miraculous cures of adulterers on condition they renounced their scandalous liaison.

[92] The 'respite' is a type of miracle which became common in the modern period; it consisted of the momentary resurrection of a child that had died unbaptized, which, by allowing a valid baptism, assured the child's salvation and enabled it to be buried in consecrated ground: see M. Bernos, 'Réflexions sur un miracle à l'Annonciade d'Aix en Provence. Contribution à l'étude des sanctuaires "à répit" ', *Annales du Midi*, 82 (1970), pp. 5–20; Bernos, 'Miracles chez les Servites en Provence à l'époque moderne', *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité*, 49 (1973), pp. 243–56. The earliest known cases date from the fourteenth century. Some fifteenth-century examples are noted by P. Paravy, 'Angoisse collective et miracles au seuil de la mort: résurrection et baptêmes d'enfants morts-nés en Dauphiné au XVe siècle', in *La mort au Moyen Age. Colloque de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur public (Strasbourg, 1975)* (Strasbourg, 1977), pp. 87–102.

[93] *PC Nicholas of Linköping*, p. 358. The blind man cried: 'adiuva me tuis meritis preciosis ut videre possim creatorem quem toto corde videre desidero'. For belief in the salutary virtue of contemplation of the host, see A. L. Mayer, 'Die heilbringende Schau', in *Heilige Uberliefferung, Festschrift I. Herwegen* (Münster, 1938), pp. 234–62.

[94] *PC Yves*, p. 105; see also p. 87. There is a comparable claim in the office published under the title *In translatione S. Ludovici episcopo Tolosani* in *Analecta Franciscana*, VII, p. 260: 'Hoc autem praetermittendum non est de huius sancti virtutibus quod accedentes ad sacrum sepulchrum non sine stupore . . . in quadam insolita et mira immutatione hactenus inexperta sepe inveniuntur divinitus immutati, quasi ipsa ossa felicia sanctatate redolencia vim divinam haberent sibi animos modo quodam mirabili in melius alterandi.' There could hardly be a better example of the spiritualizing effect of *virtus*!

[95] At the process of Clare of Montefalco (*PC*, fol. 885), Blaise of Spoleto declared that, under her influence, 'mutatus fuit in alium hominem'. At that of Delphine (*PC*, fols.

this confined to prodigies accomplished by the saints during their lifetime; the faithful sometimes attributed their resistance to temptation to the intercession of saints dead for several years.[96] Statistically, these miracles are insignificant, and it would be going too far to speak of a general change in the representations of sainthood. We should, however, note their appearance, as there is nothing comparable in the earlier texts.[97]

More significant, perhaps, is the change of attitude towards the saints revealed by some fourteenth-century processes. Their depositions suggest that some witnesses visited a given servant of God not to ask for a cure but to verify and, if possible, experience personally the reality of the miraculous gifts attributed to them. The chief of these was spiritual clairvoyance, that gift of 'clear sight' which made it possible to see into people's hearts and divine their hidden secrets.[98] Another was the prophetic charisma, which was a direct extension of it; at the end of the Middle Ages, men and women who foretold the arrival of collective catastrophes or threatened their contemporaries with the wrath of God if they did not convert were regarded as saints, especially if their predictions came true in their lifetime or immediately after their death.[99] In this context, the saints were more than ever exceptional beings. But the prodigies expected of them were not only therapeutic or apotropaic. In the popular mind, they were beginning to be seen also as clairvoyants who shared the divine privilege of omniscience.

This change is confirmed by the attitude of the saints to their own charismas; after about 1330, those who were the object of a process of

122r–v), the fourteenth witness listed all the people, who, to his knowledge, had been converted by the saint; it included clergy as well as laity, not least the bishop of Apt.

[96] At the process of St Thomas Aquinas, a canon of Salerno claimed to have been delivered from carnal desires through his intercession: *PC Thomas Aquinas*, p. 266; for a similar miracle see *PC Delphine*, fols. 25v–26 (article 61).

[97] There are many miracles which can be categorized as religious in twelfth-century books of miracles and thirteenth-century processes, but these include the prodigies by which saints took vengeance on those who refused to believe in their *virtus* and who blasphemed against them. This type of miracle persisted up to the end of the Middle Ages, but became numerically insignificant. At the process of St Yves (Tréguier, 1330), only two of the hundred miracles recorded by the inquisitors were of this type (*PC Yves*, pp. 385, 421).

[98] A witness at the process of Clare of Montefalco (*PC*, fol. 712) described his motives for visiting the saint as follows: 'Eamus ad Montemfalcum et loquamur cuidam sanctae quae vocatur soror Clara, de qua est fama quod dicat multa occulta hominum et precipue eorum quos nunquam vidit et experiemur utrum si [*sic*] haec vera sunt.' For the gift of clear sight, see P. Pourrat, sv Clairvoyance spirituelle, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, II (Paris, 1953), cc. 922–9.

[99] This was as common in the Nordic countries (process of St Bridget, Dorothy of Montau and Nicholas of Linköping) as in Italy from the second half of the fourteenth century; see below, pp. 523–4.

canonization seem not to have been, in their lifetime, great miracle-workers. Even more, when cures followed their touch, they seem to have been, if anything, embarrassed by manifestations of a power which was beyond their control and risked making them appear as sorcerers or magicians. Many witnesses at the process of Delphine of Puimichel (d. 1360) told how a sick woman had one day been cured after touching the hem of her gown without the saint being aware of what was happening. Soon after, the woman began to proclaim far and wide the news of this prodigy, which filled the saint with shame and despair. 'If God does not come to my aid', she is supposed to have said, 'I will soon be cast into hell for this.'[100] She agreed, however, to lay her hands on certain sick people, when she could see that they had faith and on condition that they behaved discreetly. But if we are to believe Canon Durand André of Apt, her doctor and confessor, she refused to see a band of blind, epileptic and sick people from the dioceses of Uzès, Maguelonne and Avignon, who came 'to see the saintly countess, in the hope of obtaining health through her sanctity and merits'. They spent four days before her cell begging her to appear, while she bemoaned the situation:

> See how silly, stupid and senseless are these people who want to see me! Why do they come to me? I am neither Peter nor Paul, but a putrid body promised to the worms and a heap of iniquities. They ask for signs, they ask for prodigies, they ask for miracles. I am afraid rather that they and I are given as signs Dathan and Abyron who were buried alive.[101]

This was, admittedly, an extreme, and therefore atypical, reaction. But since, at the same process of canonization (Apt, 1363), two Franciscans who had known the saint well in her lifetime claimed that she performed no miracles, either before or after her death, we may conclude that this was a religious milieu that was impervious or indifferent to miracles, where sainthood was an exclusively spiritual phenomenon.[102] Though numerically insignificant, it is nevertheless, by its very existence, evidence of a change in attitudes which extended to a religious elite of lay women.

Our analysis of the depositions of witnesses at medieval processes of

[100] *PC Delphine*, fol. 101.
[101] *Ibid.*, fol. 100v.
[102] *Ibid.*, fols. 69, 73v. The two men were Isnard Risi and Bertrand Joubert. In the thirteenth century, the companions of St Clare of Assisi, asked about the nature of her spirituality, defined it as an unspeakable reality, of a spiritual order: 'Ancho disse che non credava che né lei né nessuna de le Sore potesse pienamente dire la santità e la grandessa de la

canonization produces what may, at first sight, appear contradictory impressions. First, it seems that no-one questioned the existence of visible signs and concrete manifestations of sanctity. Even in the case of prodigies that we might be inclined to describe as spiritual, like the 'exchange of hearts' among the mystics, the most rigorous theologians concurred with public opinion in regarding them as an objective reality, of a physiological order. The same was true of the benefits expected of the celestial intercessors; at the end of the fourteenth century, a bishop dedicated himself to a saint in exactly the same way as his manservant, and the favours they requested were often not very much different. This similarity confirms the validity of the concept of the popular mind, that I have used for convenience. However, the semiotic field of sainthood perceptibly changed between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries. The change took place at different speeds according to region and social circle. It was far advanced by the first third of the fourteenth century in the Mediterranean countries, especially among the aristocracy and the urban bourgeoisie; it seems to have been less marked elsewhere in Christendom, above all in the Germanic and Scandinavian countries and among the peasantry. To begin with, in effect, the signs of sainthood recorded by our documents derived from a sacred that was relatively undifferentiated. From the 1300s, the relationship between the faithful and the saints began to lose its 'mechanistic' and automatic character. The *virtus* of the servants of God was no longer seen only as a collection of mysterious forces acting in a privileged place; the contract between the faithful and their heavenly protector continued to be based on the principle of 'a fair exchange', but became more personalized in devotion, and sometimes acquired a new affective, moral or religious dimension. The miracles requested were essentially cures, but other sides of life came within the sphere of influence of sanctity, the effectiveness of which was more often defined in terms of protection and even salvation.

As far as we can tell, these changes seem to have taken place without conflict and relatively spontaneously. It is hardly likely that the depositions recorded by the commissioners *in partibus* were amended at a later stage, or that the promoters of the causes of canonization told the lay witnesses what to say, prompting them to conceal what might offend ecclesiastical ears. There is therefore no reason to question them, even if the circum-

vita de la sancta memoria di madonna Chiara, exceptio che non havesse lo Spirito Santo che glie lo facerse dire': *PC*, p. 451.

stances in which the statements were recorded, almost always in translation, may have given a clerical gloss to the views actually held by the faithful. The evolution visible in this sphere is not the result of pressure intended to eliminate forms of religiosity which were deemed impure. It proceeded by additions, not rejections, and the new forms of devotion coexisted without difficulty alongside others which began to appear archaic. The clergy – or at least most of them – do not seem to have tried to persuade the faithful to renounce traditional practices. Their interventions were rather designed to ensure that the signs, whatever they were, did not in themselves play a decisive role in the appreciation of sainthood, and to emphasize that they were the results not the cause. If there was disagreement between the masses and the religious elite (which included some lay people, as we have seen), it was at this level that it existed. We will find confirmation of this below, when we discuss the way in which the Roman Church scrutinized the reports of the enquiries in which the beliefs and convictions of the majority were expressed.